

THE SOUTHERN NEGRO ON THE FARM

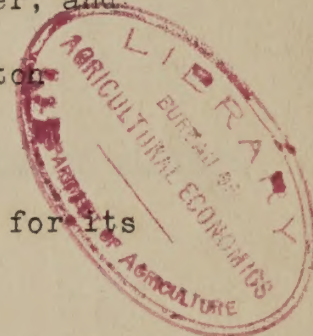
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HIS PROBLEMS AND WHAT THE FSA IS DOING ABOUT THEM

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Farming is both a business and a way of life for half of all Negroes in America. Ninety-five percent of all Negro farm operators are in the South, and more than three-fourths of these are tenants. Farm tenants fall, roughly, into three classes:

1. Sharecroppers, who contribute labor only, receiving in return a share of the crop.
2. "Third and fourth" tenants, who supply equipment and bear some managerial responsibility and receive larger shares of the crop according to their contribution of feed, fertilizer, and equipment, a third of the corn and a fourth of the cotton being a common rental.
3. "Standing renters", who rent the land outright, paying for its use either in cash or produce.



In the South, one-half of all sharecroppers are Negroes. The number of Negro croppers exceeds the number of white croppers in Georgia, South Carolina, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi. Mississippi has three and one-half times as many Negro as white croppers; Louisiana has twice as many. In other states where the actual number of Negro croppers is less than the number of white croppers, the proportion of croppers within the racial group is much larger among Negroes than among whites. In Kentucky, for instance, where 30,258 white croppers constitute only 30 percent of white tenants, the 2,736 Negro croppers are 65 percent of Kentucky's Negro tenants. Other states

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show even higher proportions. Mississippi's Negro tenants are 71 percent sharecroppers, and 82 percent of all Georgia's Negro tenants are in this class. Half of all Negro children growing to manhood and womanhood on Southern farms face the drudgery and neglect typical of most croppers' children of any race.

Chief among the evils which the poor man on the farm -- small owner, tenant or laborer -- has to face are poor housing, high mortality, insecurity and debt.

Bad housing and sanitation are reflected in hookworm and anemia. Faulty diets result in pellagra. The yearly toll from death and disease adds to the burden of indebtedness, while beneath all these hurtful conditions lies the menace of insecurity, crippling both landlord and tenant in any effort toward progress.

I. WHAT IS THE FARM SECURITY ADMINISTRATION AND WHAT IS IT DOING TO CORRECT SUCH CONDITIONS WHERE THEY EXIST?

A. What It Is:

1. It is an agency of the United States Department of Agriculture, set up to help needy farm families which are unable to get help elsewhere.

B. What It Does:

1. It makes rehabilitation loans, at 5 percent interest, for periods of one to five years. With such a loan, the farmer buys the things he needs to make a living from the land -- wagons, mules, milk cows, seed, fertilizer, etc. Usually included in the loan

are reserve funds sufficient to provide the family with food and clothing through a crop year. Farmers obtaining these loans cooperate with Farm Security Administration farm and home management supervisors in making and carrying out plans for each year's operations.

- a. Every farm plan calls for the production at home of enough food to supply the farm family with a properly balanced diet, thus preventing dietary diseases and improving general health.
- b. The farm plan also calls for the production at home of ample feed for the livestock, increasing the value of the stock and conserving cash.
- c. The plan calls for the conservation of the soil by sound farm practices, such as crop rotation, planting of cover crops, and erosion control.

Through rehabilitation loans, families are learning to keep their books, make their budgets, and live within them. Approximately 50,000 such loans, representing 12.5 percent of the total, have been made to Negro farmers in the last four years. Negro farmers are 12.6 percent of America's farm operators.

2. It enables selected renters, sharecroppers or farm laborers with energy, ambition and a good record to become established as owners on desirable land through long-time loans in larger amounts, repayable over a period of 40 years. Cooperative supervision is a part of all loan agreements. During the first year of operation of the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act -- 1937-38 --

265 loans were made to Negro tenants, constituting 18.6 percent of the total for Regions IV, V, VI and VIII where Negroes on farms are found in appreciable numbers. Negro tenancy in this area is 34.1. Applications for 1937-38 were 19.3 percent of the total and for this year were 26.4.

a. In actual figures there were five times as many Negro applications this year as last year -- 26,989 as compared with 5,089. Figures for whites rose proportionately.

3. It is trying to develop better social and economic patterns in agriculture by establishing homestead projects. Some of them are new communities, while others consist of scattered individual farms. More than 1,000 Negro families were living on such projects in January, 1939.

a. Farmsteads on these projects are provided with houses, barns, and out buildings. Representatives of the Farm Security Administration guide these homesteaders in their farm work, exactly as they help FSA rehabilitation borrowers.

b. In addition to this assistance, project farmers learn to farm cooperatively. Cooperative stores, gins and marketing services are acquainting them with the benefits of cooperatives.

c. Negro farmers, together with others, are profiting by this experience. They are established on 31 projects in 13 Southeastern States.

4. FSA also is setting up rental cooperatives, through which groups of tenants can improve their tenureship and living conditions by leasing large tracts of land through FSA loans, and operating them cooperatively, usually with an option to buy within a given period.
 - a. Thirty such rental cooperatives are being set up for operation in the Mississippi Delta area. Color ratio on these projects is determined by the need in the area.
 - b. Projects on which Negro youths can secure "internships" in modern farm practices are pointing the way for the coming generation.
 - c. By encouraging long-term written leases, FSA is trying to cure some of the worst evils of tenancy. Such leases benefit both owner and tenant, since they encourage better housing and better land use.
5. FSA supplies, without cost, a debt adjustment service which is available to all farmers. Volunteer local committees have arranged debt adjustments which have saved American farmers \$78,807,693 in the last four years. There is no racial breakdown on these figures, but case histories on file at Farm Security Administration offices show that Negro farmers especially are benefiting by this service.

6. It offers loans to small groups of farmers unable to purchase livestock, heavy farm equipment and other needed services individually, enabling them to purchase these for community use. Negroes are making increasing use of these community services.
7. It is releasing land to its proper use by limiting loans to farmers established on land suitable for cultivation, and by assisting in the relocation of farmers situated on sub-marginal or cut-over lands.
 - a. It is restoring land to cultivation through erosion control by its clients, and by instructing and directing its borrowers in soil-building practices.
8. It is shaping patterns in rural education, by providing adequate school buildings and equipment on many projects. State and County school authorities cooperate in supplying competent staffs to teach subjects carefully correlated with rural life. Negro tenants particularly are welcoming this educational guidance.
9. It is supplying medical aid through the establishment of group medical care associations, through which clients receive service of physicians and nurses at minimum rates, supplanting fear, neglect and superstition with skilled assistance.

III. HOW IS THIS PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE FSA AND THE FARMER DIRECTED?

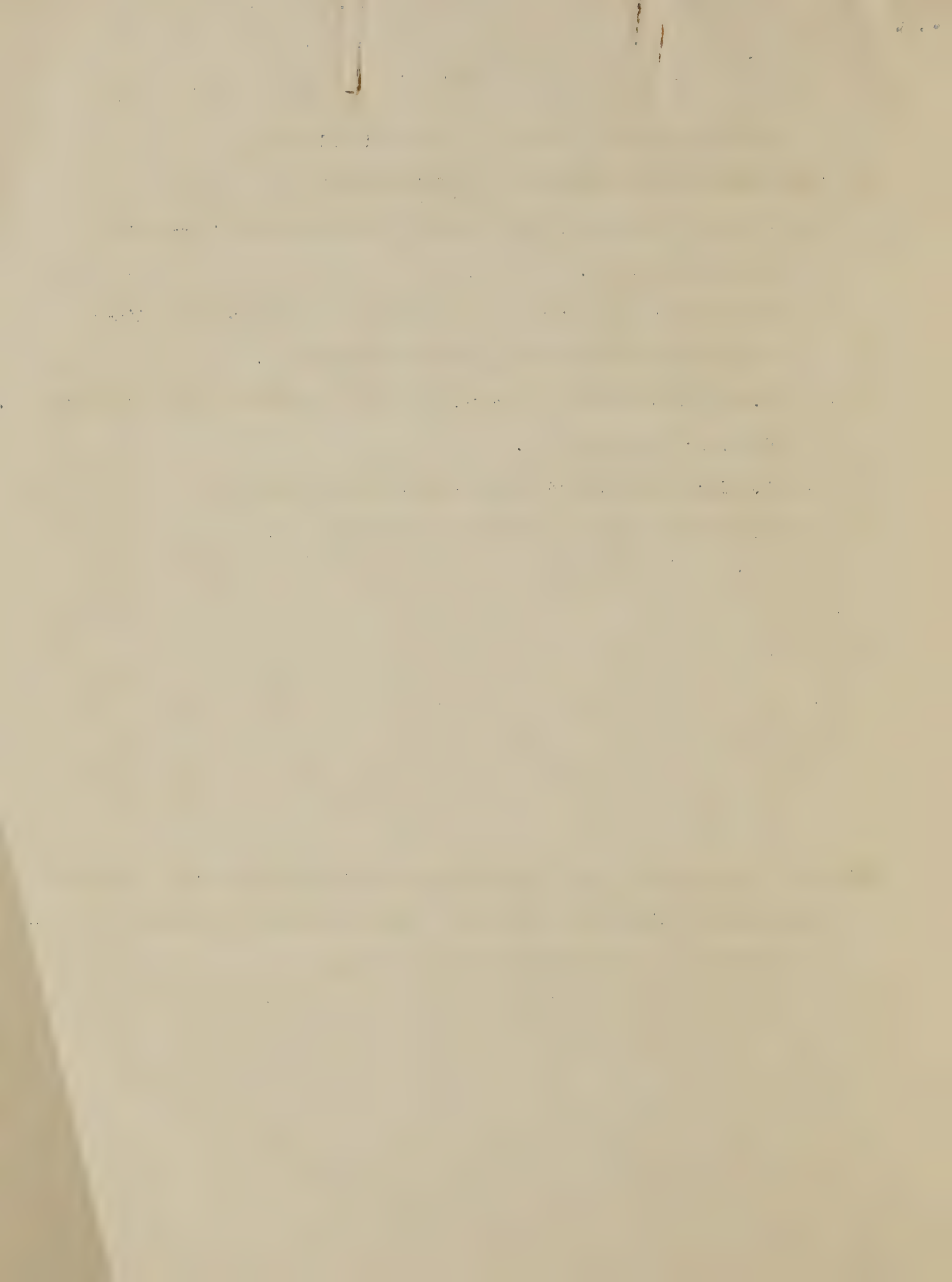
- A. By close cooperation between FSA supervisors and borrowers, planning together for the development of each farm unit affected: the cash crop, garden produce, canning, farm procedure, and setting up of

farm bookkeeping, including budget and inventory.

IV. WHAT HAVE BEEN THE RESULTS OF THIS PARTNERSHIP?

- A. Increased self-respect as evidenced by repayments -- often made ahead of time.
- B. Increases in net worth in terms of increased canning, livestock and equipment and improved diet and housing.
- C. General improvement in tenureship and in owner-tenant relationships.
- D. Increased ownership.
- E. Increased knowledge of modern agricultural methods.
- F. Improvement in health and living standards.

NOTE: The attached table shows the distribution among tenure groups of Negroes and whites in the fourteen Southern States, Maryland and Missouri -- the status of the Southern Negro on the farm.



COMPARATIVE FIGURES ON DISTRIBUTION OF FARM TENURESHIP

AMONG NEGROES AND WHITES IN SOUTH

Key: Upper figures white; lower figures Negro

STATE	FARM POPULATION (Individuals on Farms)	OWNERS		OPERATORS		TENANTS		CROPPERS	
			%		%		%		%
Maryland	241,596	28,798	91.3	39,595	88.9	9,976	82.3	1,061	63.8
	<u>41,861</u>	<u>2,728</u>	<u>8.6</u>	<u>4,906</u>	<u>11.0</u>	<u>2,135</u>	<u>17.6</u>	<u>600</u>	<u>36.1</u>
	283,457	31,526	100	44,501	100	12,111	100	1,661	100
Missouri	1,183,499		97.6						
	<u>28,855</u>		<u>2.3</u>						
	1,212,354		100						
Kentucky	1,307,816	170,609	97.6	270,048	97.0	99,028	95.9	30,258	91.6
	<u>43,313</u>	<u>4,052</u>	<u>2.3</u>	<u>8,250</u>	<u>2.9</u>	<u>4,187</u>	<u>4.0</u>	<u>2,756</u>	<u>8.2</u>
	1,351,129	174,661	100	278,298	100	103,215	100	33,014	100
N. Carolina	1,623,481	137,738	87.1	231,594	76.9	93,173	65.5	36,392	54.8
	<u>460,986</u>	<u>20,373</u>	<u>12.8</u>	<u>69,373</u>	<u>23.0</u>	<u>48,985</u>	<u>34.4</u>	<u>30,001</u>	<u>45.1</u>
	2,084,467	158,111	100	300,967	100	142,158	100	66,393	100
Tennessee	1,508,420	138,853	94.6	239,337	87.4	100,062	78.9	35,381	68.7
	<u>169,917</u>	<u>7,843</u>	<u>5.2</u>	<u>34,396</u>	<u>12.5</u>	<u>26,545</u>	<u>20.9</u>	<u>16,096</u>	<u>31.2</u>
	1,478,337	146,696	100	273,733	100	126,607	100	51,477	100
Virginia	1,053,469	110,477	79.9	154,421	78.1	42,874	73.4	12,137	66.5
	<u>269,009</u>	<u>27,662</u>	<u>20.0</u>	<u>43,211</u>	<u>21.8</u>	<u>15,512</u>	<u>26.5</u>	<u>6,102</u>	<u>33.4</u>
	1,322,478	138,139	100	197,632	100	58,386	100	18,239	100
W. Virginia	561,919	76,622	99.3	104,054	99.3	26,846	99.3	3,032	99.6
	<u>4,255</u>	<u>511</u>	<u>.6</u>	<u>693</u>	<u>.6</u>	<u>175</u>	<u>.6</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>.3</u>
	566,174	77,133	100	104,747	100	27,021	100	3,043	100

STATE	FARM POPULATION (Individuals on Farms)		OWNERS		OPERATORS		TENANTS		CROPPERS	
		%		%		%		%		%
Alabama	1,138,074	69.8	80,983	83.7	182,180	66.6	100,705	57.1	34,717	51.0
	<u>490,706</u>	<u>30.1</u>	<u>15,709</u>	<u>16.2</u>	<u>91,275</u>	<u>33.3</u>	<u>75,542</u>	<u>42.8</u>	<u>33,257</u>	<u>48.9</u>
	1,628,780	100	96,692	100	273,455	100	176,247	100	67,974	100
Florida	319,658	78.8	42,627	86.2	60,093	82.4	14,777	71.3	3,153	67.4
	<u>85,579</u>	<u>21.1</u>	<u>6,792</u>	<u>13.7</u>	<u>12,764</u>	<u>17.5</u>	<u>5,922</u>	<u>23.6</u>	<u>1,521</u>	<u>32.5</u>
	405,237	100	49,419	100	72,857	100	20,699	100	4,674	100
Georgia	1,405,944	72.7	74,626	87.5	177,259	70.7	101,649	61.8	41,672	44.7
	<u>525,612</u>	<u>27.2</u>	<u>10,571</u>	<u>12.4</u>	<u>73,285</u>	<u>29.2</u>	<u>62,682</u>	<u>38.1</u>	<u>51,404</u>	<u>55.2</u>
	1,931,557	100	85,197	100	250,544	100	164,331	100	93,076	100
S. Carolina	948,435	65.0	43,548	70.3	88,967	53.7	44,802	43.5	16,001	34.0
	<u>510,031</u>	<u>34.9</u>	<u>18,394</u>	<u>29.6</u>	<u>76,537</u>	<u>46.2</u>	<u>58,124</u>	<u>56.4</u>	<u>31,046</u>	<u>65.9</u>
	1,458,466	100	61,942	100	165,504	100	102,926	100	47,047	100
Arkansas	1,180,238	78.6	89,319	88.7	181,713	71.8	91,819	60.5	24,625	37.5
	<u>321,067</u>	<u>21.3</u>	<u>11,342</u>	<u>11.2</u>	<u>71,300</u>	<u>28.1</u>	<u>59,940</u>	<u>39.4</u>	<u>40,978</u>	<u>62.4</u>
	1,501,305	100	100,662	100	253,013	100	151,759	100	65,603	100
Louisiana	859,351	69.8	50,481	82.3	99,901	58.6	48,921	45.1	16,706	33.2
	<u>371,140</u>	<u>30.1</u>	<u>10,839</u>	<u>17.6</u>	<u>70,315</u>	<u>41.3</u>	<u>59,456</u>	<u>54.8</u>	<u>33,513</u>	<u>66.7</u>
	1,230,491	100	61,320	100	170,216	100	108,377	100	50,219	100
Mississippi	1,332,981	64.9	71,936	77.1	142,677	45.7	69,871	32.1	30,757	22.4
	<u>719,114</u>	<u>35.0</u>	<u>21,288</u>	<u>22.8</u>	<u>169,006</u>	<u>54.2</u>	<u>147,693</u>	<u>67.8</u>	<u>106,156</u>	<u>77.5</u>
	2,052,095	100	93,224	100	311,683	100	217,564	100	136,913	100
Oklahoma	1,015,562	91.1	75,127	91.7	195,501	91.6	119,615	91.5	10,959	80.2
	<u>98,636</u>	<u>8.8</u>	<u>6,762</u>	<u>8.2</u>	<u>17,824</u>	<u>8.3</u>	<u>11,046</u>	<u>8.4</u>	<u>2,681</u>	<u>19.6</u>
	1,114,198	100	81,889	100	213,325	100	130,661	100	13,650	100
Texas	2,332,693	85.7	190,640	90.1	429,232	85.6	235,162	82.1	50,793	66.4
	<u>387,986</u>	<u>14.2</u>	<u>20,800</u>	<u>9.8</u>	<u>71,735</u>	<u>14.2</u>	<u>50,941</u>	<u>17.8</u>	<u>25,675</u>	<u>32.5</u>
	2,720,679	100	211,440	100	501,017	100	286,103	100	76,468	100

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